

Teachers

We are proud to have wonderful, caring teachers on our staff for J-Quest on Sundays and for Hebrew . Learn more about our teachers below.

Laura Bernstein
4th Grade Sunday
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My name is Laura Bernstein and I am very excited to be teaching fourth grade each Sunday at Temple Jeremiah. I grew up at Temple Jeremiah and have celebrated many mitzvahs here. I feel very lucky to be back and part of the amazing team. I have been teaching special education for 21 years and during the week I currently teach special needs kindergarten. I am married to a wonderful man named Corey and we have 2 children, our 13-year-old son named Jack and our almost 2 year old Maggie who are both also growing up at Temple Jeremiah!

Melissa Celnik
3rd Grade Sunday and Hebrew
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My name is Melissa Celnik and I've been teaching for over 25 years. During the school year, you will find me teaching Hebrew to Bet, Gimmel, and Dalet students and Sunday School lessons to 3rd graders. I grew up in Skokie and moved to GLENVIEW in 1996 after our wedding. When I'm not in the classroom, I could be spending time with my family or friends. My husband and I enjoy taking our 3 children (plus sometimes our dog) on adventures like blueberry picking, local tourist stops, and picnicking in Lake Geneva. I love cooking and baking and sharing it with others. I also enjoy planting flowers and vegetables in our garden. Someday, I hope to have a couple of fruit trees. By the way, I'm also a member of Temple Jeremiah where all of my children had their Bar/Bat Mitzvahs.

Jessica Don
1st Grade Sunday
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My parents joined Temple Jeremiah when I was one year old. I've been here ever since then. (Needless to say, I'm a fan of Temple Jeremiah.) I'm thrilled to get to work with First Graders. I love their creativity and curiosity. This year we will investigate how to be Jewish – the people, places, and things that create our Jewish community. We'll also begin to explore the Jewish holidays and traditions. When I'm not hanging out at temple, I can be found hanging out with my husband, 2 kids, 1 cat ... and probably coffee. Yeah, odds are pretty good I'll have a cup of coffee with me.

Stacy Dudek
5th Grade Sunday and Hebrew
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My name is Stacy Dudek and I have been with Temple Jeremiah since 2008. I was a middle school Language Arts/Literacy teacher for 10 years before having children and deciding to stay home with them. I absolutely love teaching at Temple Jeremiah. I have learned so much more about my religion and my culture simply by being present at the temple. I have taught 5th, 7th, 9th, 10th, and Aleph, Bet and Gimmel Hebrew and have loved them all! Can I really call coming to temple and interacting with such a variety of great people "work"???

Elizabeth Gossage
5th & 6th Grades
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Shalom! I am Elizabeth Gossage and this is my first year teaching at Temple Jeremiah. Over the past 25 years I have taught public school and supplemental Sunday school. Outside of Temple Jeremiah I am an educator, certified Life Designer Coach® and IntenSati® Leader and have served in leadership roles for Reboot in Chicago, Congregation Etz Chaim of DuPage County, and Hadassah Chicago-North Shore. I am also the founder and executive director of Bridges 613, a concierge for your Jewish experience. I launched The Bridging Connections podcast in March 2020.

Rabbi Debbie Helbraun
5th & 7th Grades Sunday and
Hebrew Principal
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I enjoy being a teacher because I am committed to the continuity of Jewish life and making connections in the North American Jewish community. I am dedicated to well-being both personally and for the communities I serve. I am excited to be teaching at Temple Jeremiah this year and would love to connect with you. Please email me at elizabeth@bridges613.org.

My name is Rabbi Debbie Helbraun. You can look at the [staff page](#) to see my professional skills and accomplishments. When not at Temple Jeremiah, I love spending time outdoors. I walk 25-30 miles a week, usually with my dog. I also like to read and listen to music. I am passionate about social justice and teaching. I look forward to two weeks at OSRUI every summer, spending informal time with our youth. Much of the rest of my free time is spent with my family: my husband, Sid; daughter, Becca; and son, Jonah.

This year I will be teaching both Fifth and Seventh grades. Although I serve in an administrative role, getting in the classroom and interacting with the students continues to be a priority for me. I especially try to engage in informal, “camp-style” learning, helping students to discover about themselves, their heritage, and how they become active and caring Jews in our ever-changing world.

Benjamin Herst
4th & 6th Grades
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My name is Benjamin Herst and I teach 4th and 6th grades at Temple Jeremiah. While it is my first-year teaching here, I have been teaching in religious school and day school settings for several decades. As a true Southsider, I grew up in the city. I eventually left Chicago in the '80s to spend time living in Boston and Silver Spring, Maryland. During those years, I helped open Capital Camps and served as the Executive Director of the Yeshiva of Greater Washington. Currently, I serve as the Rabbinic Advisor to the Keshet Day School and work as the Judaic Coordinator for Jewish Children and Family Services in their Group Homes Division.

Growing up I attended OSRUI, first as a camper and then as a staff member. My real claim to fame was directing CFTY (currently known as NFTY-CAR) and being the Assistant Director at OSRUI many, many, years ago. I have a BA in Music from Berklee College of Music in Boston and Rabbinic ordination from Yeshivas L'Rabbonus in Pretoria, South Africa, and New York. We have 9 children who of course live everywhere BUT Chicago, and many more than a baseball team of grandchildren.

Temple Jeremiah is an incredible place to work, and I have found the students to be interested, inquisitive and very smart. The school administration is amazing! I look forward to getting to know your children better and meeting you as well.

Suzanne McAulay
4th Grade Sunday
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My name is Suzanne McAulay. This is my second year teaching 4th grade. I have been an active member of Temple Jeremiah since 2014. I am the mother of one 10-year old son, Konrad.

During the week, I am the Deputy General Counsel of a global financial brokerage firm.

I am excited to be working with the other 4th Grade teachers and your children to create a fun learning environment.

Fred Oskin
6th Grade Sunday
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I hail originally from Buffalo, New York, but have been in Chicago for approximately 40 years. I am married and have three grown children. As a social worker, I have worked in the Jewish communal service field in New Orleans, Harrisburg, PA, as well as in Chicago.

I have been the Executive Director of two Chicago residential care facilities, the Association of the Jewish Blind and the Northwest Home for the Aged. Besides being privileged to be a religious school teacher at Temple Jeremiah for a long time, I am also a professor in the Dominican University School of Social Work, plus I serve as an adjunct faculty member of the University of Phoenix.

An especially avid sports fan, I'm a loyal supporter of the Bears, Bulls, Cubs, and White Sox, as well as of the University at Buffalo, the University of Illinois, the University of Wisconsin, Northwestern University, and the University of Southern California.

Our special interest is in our extended family which includes our three grandsons, Jacob, Avery, and Joshua, along with our granddaughter, Maddie (Madison),

I also particularly enjoy photography, graphic design with computers, exercising, long-distance running, and both stationary and outdoor bicycling.

Welcome to Sunday school at Temple Jeremiah; we are going to have a wonderful year! Our curriculum, via stories, videos and art projects, centers on our holidays, the rituals surrounding the holidays and our Jewish identity. We also focus on doing *mitzvot*, good deeds, that kids can do. In addition to all that, one of the most important lessons learned in Kindergarten is to become comfortable in our Temple and to become part of the temple community. At University, I learned that young children respond best with positive reinforcement; that's what they receive in class.

In 7th grade, we bring the class issues of the day. Through discussion, give our students a chance to give their opinions and insights on topics relating to their lives and how they are becoming Jewish young adults. When I joined the 7th grade team several years ago, the class has never ceased to amaze me with their thoughtfulness and insightful commentary.

My family has been members of Temple Jeremiah for more than 20 years. Both of our daughters have celebrated their Bat Mitzvah and Confirmation here; they

Karen Rohrbach
Kindergarten & 7th Grades Sunday
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Alexis Ruda
2nd Grade Sunday and Hebrew
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both served as teacher's aides through high school. When I'm not at Sunday school I am an avid football fan. After Sunday school, I can be found watching a football game...any football game!

Hi! My name is Alexis Ruda, and I have been a teacher at Temple Jeremiah for 10. I have had the pleasure of working with first graders, fifth graders, and everyone in between. Currently, I teach second grade Sunday school along with Aleph and Bet Hebrew. My roots at Jeremiah run deep. As a child, the time I spent at Temple with my aunt and uncle inspired a lifelong love of Judaism. At the age of 23, while living and working in New York City, I studied Hebrew in earnest and celebrated my Bat Mitzvah right here at Temple Jeremiah (it's never too late!). Today, it is a privilege and a joy to be a teacher at this synagogue that has been so close to my heart all these years.

I live in Chicago with my big silly dog, Hercules.

Jordan Shacter
3rd Grade Sunday and Hebrew
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I am looking forward to another year at Jeremiah! I am a certified K-9 teacher, but currently work as a full-time stay-at-home dad to my five children, 4 daughters: Dena, Penina, Aliyah and Malka and 1 son, Yitzi. We will also be G-d willing, expanding by one this Spring as my wife is expecting our sixth baby! We also recently had two other additions: a Syrian Hamster named Cocoa and a Lionhead Rabbit named Lional. Along with my wife Devorah, we live in the West Rogers Park neighborhood of Chicago.

In addition to my responsibilities at home and at temple, I also act as a Chazan for Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur services at Bay Shul in Buffalo Grove, where I grew up and my parents still live.

In my free time I enjoy spending time with my family, relaxing while playing the piano and cheering on the Chicago Cubs.

Marina Shubin
Hebrew
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Judy Tatar
2nd Grade Sunday
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My name is Marina Shubin and I have been a Hebrew and Religious School teacher for more than 20 years at several area synagogues, Jewish institutions, and public schools, in both formal and informal settings. I have been a B'nai Mitzvah tutor for Temple Jeremiah for the past five years and I am very excited to continue teaching Gimel and Daled classes in Hebrew School this year.

I moved here from Israel in 1999 to receive a B.S in Psychology from Loyola University Chicago and a Master's in Psychology from National Louis University. Prior to living in Israel, I grew up in Russia, moving to Israel when I was nine years old.

I now live in Highland Park with my husband and my wonderful children and we love spending time with our extended family, traveling and having fun outdoors!

Hello!!

My name is Judy Tatar and I am so excited to be teaching 2nd grade.

My undergraduate education was in marine biology and special education...how's that for diversity! I received my masters in reading consultation from the University of Chicago. I retired from teaching after 34 years at New Trier High School and then Lincoln Hall Middle School in Lincolnwood. I love working with all age groups, watching my students' grow, and of course those "light bulb" moments.

I grew up in Evanston and at Beth Emet Synagogue and taught in their religious school for many years (Rabbi Cohen was one of my students!!) I live in Wilmette with my husband Jerry and our two big, hairy dogs, Ozzie and Bailey. My three children, Daniel, Michael, and Laura are all grown up and Laura made Aliyah (lives in Israel) in 2018.

My heart belongs to my granddaughter, Olivia Sophia.

I love to sing, travel, and spend time with my family doing whatever. I am an actress and have been in several commercials and completed two short films.

When we joined Jeremiah, I became a member of the choir with Cantor Friedman. I am also a member of the Inclusion Committee which focuses on programming for differently abled people.

I look forward to meeting my rising second graders and parents! Please feel free to contact me at jbtatar@gmail.com.

Mindy Tibbetts
3rd Grade Sunday and Hebrew
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Hi, my name is Mindy Tibbetts and I have been teaching at Temple Jeremiah since 1999. I teach Third Grade Sunday school and Hebrew school during the week. My husband, Mark, and I have three wonderful children and one big dog! Speaking of dogs, I have always had a special place in my heart for all animals. During my free time I enjoy spending time with my family, my pets, and my friends. Not only do I teach at Temple Jeremiah, but I am a member as well!

Ros Wolfe
Hebrew
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Hello, my name is Rosalyn Wolfe and I have been a member of Temple Jeremiah for almost 40 years. I have taught religious and Hebrew school for over 30 years and I am one of Jeremiah's Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutors.

Along with teaching, I also serve as Executive Director of a Synagogue in Northbrook focusing on addiction in the Jewish community. I have varied experiences in congregations throughout the community teaching students with special needs, Adult Education, and Confirmation.

I currently reside in Northbrook and have three children that all became Bar/Bat Mitzvah and Confirmed at Temple Jeremiah and two delightful grandchildren.

I look forward to working with your children.